by Elaine Currie

EZINE ARTICLE WRITING
10 STEPS TO SUCCESS

Tips for successfully writing ezine articles
from inspiration to publication, step by step.

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LEGAL NOTICE

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INTRODUCTION

My name is Elaine Currie. I am a writer and have been a website owner since early 2004. The object of this book is to lead you step by step through the process of writing and publishing your first ezine article and to point you in the right direction for writing and submitting further articles.

Article marketing works and it works best when you do it the right way!

When I started submitting articles to the directories, there was not so much interest in article marketing. Marketers were mostly hung up on other forms of advertising, and nobody was giving in-depth teaching on the subject of writing articles for ezines.

A very bad personal experience taught me the true value of article marketing.

I had written and submitted a hundred or so articles to the online article directories when disaster struck my life. In January 2008 my husband died very suddenly, in March 2008 I had health problems, in May 2008 my mother passed away unexpectedly.

One lasting side effect of the shock and stress was that my ability to concentrate was destroyed. Instead of being able to write numerous articles each day, I could barely write out a grocery list; I couldn't remember any html and had no interest in internet marketing.

My online business was left entirely untouched for a bit over eighteen months.

The strange magnetism of internet marketing eventually got the better of me and I was drawn back to my websites. Despite my inaction, affiliate commissions had continued to arrive regularly by post. When I started work again, I was amazed to discover that numerous deposits had also gone into my PayPal account. Even more amazingly, my website stats showed that traffic had been steadily increasing.

I hadn't been working, but my articles had!

Some people find it so hard to write their first article that they give up and never get to enjoy any of the benefits article writing can bring. Following the 10 steps in this book will help you to find your way easily through the process of writing ezine articles and getting them published.

The hardest article you will ever have to write is your first one;
it keeps on getting easier after that.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL RULES

Rules apply to just about everything we do and ezine article writing is no exception. Rules are made for a reason, so its a good idea to take notice of them. These are some general rules to bear in mind if you want to become a successful ezine article author. Think of these rules as tips because their purpose is to help you.

Rule 1

If the rules of article writing were going to be reduced to only one, this one would be it:. Never, never, never talk down to your readers. People read articles to obtain information or to be entertained, they don't want to be lectured and won't take kindly to being patronized.

Being able to write does not make you better than your readers (and don't forget many of them will be writers too) any more than being blond or double jointed would. The ability to write simply means that you were born with (or have learned) how to pass on information coherently in writing. If you treat people like dummies, all the writing ability in the world will not make you popular. Would you want to read anything written by a person who clearly thinks you are a dummy?

Rule 2

Do not plagiarize other writers' work. It is fine to read articles by other authors, in fact, that is a great way to get ideas and to stimulate your own creativity, but never copy another author's writing. Imitation might be the sincerest form of flattery, but direct copying is simple theft.

To find pirated writing, all anyone needs to do is type a few words into an online program (such as you will find at Copyscape) and the truth will be revealed in seconds. Credibility, once lost is practically impossible to recover. Don't risk your reputation by cheating.

Rule 3

If you are new to writing, stick to subjects that are familiar to you for your first dozen or so articles. There are certain techniques you need to learn in order to produce articles

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suitable for ezine publication.. Don't give yourself the added work of needing to research unfamiliar topics. You can broaden the range of your articles when you have mastered the basic techniques of writing for ezines.

Rule 4

When you progress to writing on unfamiliar topics, research thoroughly; don't try to get away with general waffling. Never try to use padding to get an unsubstantial article to reach the required number of words. There are legitimate ways to boost your word count if you find you are struggling (we'll take a look at these in detail later), but waffle and padding aren't the way.

Rule 5

Take pride in what you write and give it the most professional finish you can manage. Once published online, an article is out of your control and you won't want a poorly conceived or badly-written article to come back and haunt you when you are rich and/or famous.

A Tip:

Writing the best articles you possibly can, will add to your credibility. If you write consistently good articles, you could be invited to submit copy to a high profile website or to a magazine. This is an excellent way to get further free publicity for your business.

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CHAPTER 2
EZINE ARTICLE WRITING
WHAT, WHY AND HOW

What is an Ezine?

The word ezine is short for "electronic magazine". Instead of going to the shops to purchase a magazine, you can read online ezines (most are completely free of charge) on your computer. The term ezine is used to describe newsletters and online magazines which exist online for every sort of profession, hobby or interest you can possibly imagine.

An ezine can be a one page text email distributed to a list of subscribers, a single web page, or the multi-page online equivalent to a big glossy magazine complete with news, articles, special offers and advertising. Ezine editors are constantly on the lookout for articles relating to their niche topic to include in their publications.

Why write Ezine articles?

There are various reasons why people might want to write articles for publication. For instance, they might want to become famous or they might have a burning desire to share their knowledge and experience of a particular topic. However, the usual reasons for writing articles for publication online relate to a desire to make money, and there are two basic ways ezine article writing can help you make money online.

Show me the money!

The first way to make money from writing articles is to do so as a ghost writer. This means you write an article and then sell it to somebody who will publish it under their own name. When you do this, you give up all rights to the article: the article belongs to the person who buys it just as if they had written it themselves. If you subsequently publish the article, or any part of it, elsewhere you will be in breach of copyright and liable to prosecution.

Don't be tempted to try to cheat the system. The Internet is a big place but it is very easy for anyone to check to see if their copyright is being infringed. Anyone can visit a website such as Copyscape and check for evidence of plagiarism. If you get caught plagiarizing or re-selling articles, your lucrative career as a ghost writer will come to an abrupt end. People are prepared to pay well to have good quality articles written for them but they must be original articles.

The second way to make money from writing articles is to use them as a means of

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promoting your online business. To make money from a business website, you need visitors. There are no ifs or buts about this principle: if you don't have visitors to your website, you will not make any money from it. Writing articles and having them published in ezines is a very effective method of online advertising. This method of advertising also has the advantage of being free.

A note about ghost writing

If you are writing articles with the intention of selling them, you give up your right to claim ownership in a resource box or bio. As stated above, by selling your article, you give up *all* rights to it. Please note that any reference made herein to using an author's resource box or bio is not applicable to articles you are writing with the intention of selling them; the person who buys the article is the only one entitled to add a resource box to it.

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CHAPTER 3

USING EZINE ARTICLES TO PROMOTE YOUR WEBSITE

The main reason webmasters write articles is to use them as a free method of promoting their websites. Well-written original articles can be used as a powerful form of advertising. The following is a brief outline of how your articles can work for you.

Writing articles as original content for your website pages

This works in a couple of ways. Firstly, the search engines love unique content and are absolute fools for anything new. Adding keyword-rich unique articles to your website regularly, will keep the search engine bots coming back frequently to update their indexing of your website.

Submitting articles to ezine directories

Article directories are where ezine editors go to find new articles to publish in their ezines. They are also visited by people searching online for information. When you submit an article to an ezine directory, is has annexed to it what is known as an author's "resource box" or "bio". This is a piece of text that you write to promote your website or a particular product. This is where you include a link to your website, so that interested parties can click through to make a visit.

Benefits of submitting to article directories

Having your articles posted at free ezine directories has a twofold benefit. The first benefit is that it gives you a one-way link back to your website. This improves your website's ranking in the search engine placement. This is what Google calls "PR"(short for Page Rank). A link back is like a "vote" for your website. The more votes you get, the more *important* your website will appear to the search engines and this will earn you a higher place in search results.

The second benefit is that real people read ezine articles. If people choose to read your article, logic says that those persons are interested in your subject matter and, therefore, are potentially customers for the products you are offering on your website. This makes those persons "qualified traffic", ie. people who are more likely to be converted into actual customers than a person who has just arrived at your website by accident.

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Having articles published in ezines

As well as submitting your articles to ezine directories and waiting for ezine editors to find them, you can take further action to get your articles circulated by submitting them direct to ezine editors for inclusion in their newsletter or ezine. Most ezines will accept free content (provided it is suitable). Some will do so only as part of an article swap, so you would need to have your own ezine to do that. There are a few ezine publishers who treat such submissions as classified advertising and require payment, so you need to check the terms and conditions of publication at each individual website.

The viral effect of article publishing

Most webmasters will admit to feeling a warm glow whenever they get a chance for some free advertising. Getting links and real live visitors from ezine directories is enough to start that glow, but when they start to realize the power of article publishing as a viral marketing tool, they get positively hot under the collar with excitement! The viral effect is quite magical because it works without any additional effort on the part of an author.

How the viral effect works

You start by submitting your article to an ezine article directory. The viral effect comes into play the first time your article is picked up and published in an ezine as follows:

1 That ezine is circulated to its subscribing members.

2 Some of those subscribers will have their own ezines or websites and they will use your article as content.

3 Some of their subscribers will have their own ezines or websites and they will use your article as content. Start reading again from "2"…

To benefit from the viral effect, you need to write articles that appeal to human readers and not just to search engine bots. The articles need to have the following attributes:

• Interesting content
• Good grammar, spelling and punctuation
• Material that will not date too quickly
• Desirable keywords

An article with all the above will continue to spread throughout the Internet for literally

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years to come with no intervention from the author and at no cost.

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CHAPTER 4

STEP 1 CHOOSE A TOPIC

Choosing your topic is the obvious place to start writing an ezine article. If you are writing an article for use in promoting your own website, it is best if the topic is related to the content of your website. This will probably still leave you with a huge choice of subject matter and you will have to narrow your focus until you can decide on one aspect of your subject and the slant from which you will approach it when writing your article.

Hot or not?

The topic of your article can be literally anything. Before you settle on a topic, you need to decide what you want your article to do for you. Do you want to use your articles to promote a current trend by sending visitors to your blog or directly to an affiliate sales page? Alternatively, you might want to use articles to build up back links for a business website that you intend to run for years.

To have immediate appeal you should choose a hot topic. Think about what people are talking about on forums and in ezine articles that you have read recently. Check with Google and Yahoo to find recent popular search topics. Have a look at some Yahoo groups. Read some popular blogs. Get a feel for what is causing a buzz of interest online. If you are writing about hot topics that are likely to go cold within a very short time, it is vital to get your article written and submitted to the directories as quickly as possible. Old news is not news.

For an article that will carry on working as a viral marketing tool, choose a topic that won't date too quickly. For instance, an article about the current top boy band or TV soap might get you instant attention but its relevance will fade swiftly. An article about childcare or the rules of chess will still appear fresh and informative years from now.

Seasonal matters

If you are writing articles to promote seasonal products, remember that you should be working several months ahead so that your articles will have time to be distributed by the beginning of the season. It's no good waiting until November to start writing articles to promote Christmas-related products.

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Whatever you choose to write about, the best topic will be something that interests you. If you are not interested in the topic, it will be more difficult for you to write the article and your readers will be able to sense your lack of interest. You will not be able to inspire enthusiasm for the subject in your reader if you have no passion for it yourself. If you are interested in the subject, this will show in your writing. Enthusiasm can be infectious. If your readers can detect that you share their interest in a topic, they are far more likely to look for other articles you have written and to visit your website for more information.

Definite no-no's

When thinking of suitable topics for ezine articles, remember that certain topics are forbidden by virtually all article directories (certainly by all the largest ones). The article directories want articles that are fit for general consumption. To be safe, make sure you avoid topics promoting racial, sexual or religious discrimination, war, drug abuse, pornography, tobacco, firearms or anything illegal. Do not write anything defamatory or libelous about another person. Do not produce articles that are "spammy" ie just thinly disguised advertisements for a particular affiliate program.

The etiquette of review writing

Although material promoting affiliate programs is to be avoided, carefully crafted reviews of products will be accepted by some article directories. A glowing recommendation would be much less likely to be accepted than a balanced review setting out the pros and cons. It is important to make the wording as impartial as possible; it is not a good idea to submit a "rave review" to an article directory. Save the raving for your classified ads or your blog. Any reviews you submit to article directories must appear balanced as well as being informative.

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CHAPTER 5 – STEP 2

RESEARCH YOUR SUBJECT

The number one reason people search the Internet is to obtain information. Always bear in mind that people will read your article expecting to receive correct information. Therefore, you must carry out sufficiently thorough research. The nature and extent of your research will depend upon the type of article you intend to write.

If you are writing an article about your own experience or viewpoint, you probably won't need to do much in the way of research (apart from checking exact dates etc) unless you want to add references to some contrasting views which have been published by other people.

Statistics

Obviously, if you are writing an article which includes statistical information, you need to make sure your facts and figures are correct. Do not invent your own statistics or state guesswork to be facts.

Try to always quote the sources of any statistics or quotations you use in your articles. This will not only assist any readers who are researching the topic, it will also add weight to your statements and make you appear to be an authority on the subject if you quote respected sources of information. As a courtesy to your readers you could include links to any relevant websites. At the very least provide the full name of the resources you quote from.

Get to know your topic

Research is important for things like making sure of the exact date an event took place or checking the spelling of a name or checking the source of a well-known quotation. It is not, however, a substitute for understanding. You must have at least a basic knowledge of your subject matter in order to write about it in an informative way. Anyone planning to write good quality articles should not even dream of trying to get away with just regurgitating a string of half digested facts. If you don't really understand the subject, there is absolutely no way you will be able to pass on anything worthwhile to your readers.

If you think I am over-emphasizing the importance of knowing your subject, try a small experiment. Do some Google searches for articles about your home town or some other place you know well.

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Read the articles and see if you can tell the ones written by people who have actually been to the place they have written about from the ones written by people who have cobbled together pieces of information obtained third-hand.

You could also do a similar exercise with articles about something you have experienced personally, such as acne, riding a motor cycle, childbirth, salmon fishing or anything else that you can vividly recall.

Trust me on this, you will be able to tell which of the articles have been written from first-hand knowledge and which have been pasted together from non-matching parts.

Save your energy

A professional writer will be able to research and produce articles on just about any subject, but it is best to stick to subjects you already understand for your first few articles; by making this part of the process simple, you can conserve energy that will be needed on the rest of the article writing and submission process.

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CHAPTER 6 – STEP 3

MAKE UP A GREAT TITLE

The mechanics of constructing an eEzine article title to appeal to search engine bots could probably fill a whole book but, to give you an idea of what's involved, here is a condensed version.

The title can make or break your article. A title for an article is just as important as a headline for an ad. As you are writing articles to use as promotional material, this is not surprising.

Robots v Humans

Thinking up the best title for your article is tricky because there are two big considerations here: the differing tastes of search engines and humans. To get noticed by the search engines, your title needs to contain keywords relevant to the content of the article. To get noticed by humans, your title needs to stand out in some way that will intrigue them sufficiently to make them want to read the article.

It is usually possible to combine good keywords with an attention-grabbing phrase but sometimes you will know you can't please both search engine bots and humans and you just have to make a decision to appeal to either one or the other.

The keywords that will alert the search engines might not be attractive to humans while a really great eye-catching title will be ignored by the bots. In this situation, I would say it is always best to cater for the human visitor. If your title doesn't grab people's attention they will never read the rest of the article. If they don't read the article, they won't see your resource box, if they don't get as far as your resource box, they won't be clicking through to visit your website.

Don't underestimate the 'bots

My personal opinion is that the most important consideration should always be what will please your readers (and this goes for every aspect of article writing, not just the title). This conclusion is based on several reasons.

One reason for thinking that writing for our readers is better than writing with search engines in mind is that ultimately we want people to read our articles and visit our websites in search of more information.

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Another reason is that we can have a good idea what might appeal to another human being but can only guess at what will attract the attention of a search engine robot. Also, the bots are continually changing; there is no way writers can keep up with robot evolution, so it makes more sense to accommodate our readers if a choice needs to be make between them and the robots.

I also have a hunch that the gap between human readers and search engine bots will become increasingly narrow, after all, the whole point of the robot software is to select stuff the bots "think" will appeal to humans. Googlebot is becoming better educated all the time and already has an understanding of semantics.

Keep it neat

Trying too hard to attract the notice of the search engines can result in horribly unattractive titles. Repetition of keywords in an article title is advised as a way of attracting the likes of Googlebot. If your article is based on a single keyword, this can be done elegantly enough for human visitors to be oblivious to the device you are using.

If, however, your article is based on a long tail keyword phrase this would not work at all well. Putting it into your title twice would produce a clumsy-looking result which would be difficult to read, whereas the desired result is that the title should seem to flow naturally. If you write a lengthy, convoluted title, potential readers will be put off by it because the logical assumption is that the rest of the article will be written in the same awkward style.

It should also be borne in mind that some of the highest ranking article directories stipulate that a title should be seven words or fewer.

Your first words

The first 3-5 words of your title are the most important ones so don't waste them by using words like "The Top Ten Best Ways To…", "The Day I…", "An Extremely Interesting And…". Humans respond to certain words on an emotional level but the bots are unemotional creatures; they won't be excited by being told your article is about something "Extremely Interesting": they want to be fed on the keywords they can appreciate.

Put your keyword in the first 3-5 words and make sure your title is relevant to the article content. For example, instead of having "The Ten Best Ways To Alleviate An Unpleasant Outbreak Of Acne Using Herbal Remedies" as your title, it is better to use "Acne Cures: Top Ten Herbal Remedies". This has the advantage of giving you the key phrases "acne cures", "herbal remedies" and "acne remedies" within your first 5 words. This title is

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snappier and will appeal to humans scanning your title as well as to the search engine robots looking around for recognizable keyword phrases.

The most powerful word in copy-writing is said to be "free", but don't be tempted to use it unless you are promoting something that really is free. Here is a list of keywords well known by copywriters to trigger a response in humans:

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absolutely	famous	Love	shrewd
advice	fascinating	lowest	simple
affordable	focus	luxury	simplified
alert	fortune	magic	simplistic
amazing	free	mainstream	sizeable
announcing	full	mammoth	skill
approved	fundamentals	miracle	soar
astonishing	genuine	monumental	special
attractive	gift	new	special offer
authentic	gigantic	noted	spotlight
bargain	greatest	now	startling
beautiful	growth	obsession	strange
better	helpful	odd	strong
big	highest	opportunities	sturdy
bottom line	how to	outstanding	successful
breakthrough	huge	personalized	suddenly
challenge	hurry	perspective	superior
chance	imagination	pioneering	surging
colossal	guaranteed	popular	surprise
colorful	immediately	portfolio	survival
compare	important	practical	technology
competitive	improved	professional	terrific
complete	information	profitable	tested
compromise	informative	promising	the truth
confidential	innovative	proven reward	timely
crammed	insider	quality	tremendous
daring	instructive	quick	ultimate
delighted	interesting	quickly	unconditional
delivered	introducing	rare	under priced
destiny	it's here	reduced	unique
direct	just arrived	refundable	unlimited
discount	key	reliable	unlock
easily	largest	remarkable	unparalleled
easy	last	revealing	unsurpassed
edge	last minute	revisited	unusual
emerging	latest	revolutionary	urgent
endorsed	launching	sale	useful
energy	lavishly	scarce	valuable
enormous	liberal	secrets	value
excellent	lifetime	security	wanted
exciting	limited	selected	wealth
exclusive		sensational	weird
expert			wonderful
exploit			

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CHAPTER 7 – STEP 4

WRITE IN SECTIONS

Planning your article in sections will help you, particularly when you are new to article writing, to keep control of the structure of your articles.

If you look at the structure of some articles, you will see that most of them are broken down into three sections: introductory paragraph, main content and closing paragraph. In turn, the main content will be broken down into 3-5 paragraphs. This structure gives nice bit-sized pieces to work with.

For article marketing purposes, we will not write a concluding paragraph to our articles. The reason for this is that we want to give the impression that you have more to say; this will encourage the reader to visit your website. The absence of a concluding paragraph will also lead the reader's eyes naturally down to your resource box containing your link.

How many words?

Many article directories will refuse to accept an article consisting of fewer than 250 words; the most suitable length for an article is between 300 and 700 words. Let's go for 400 words for our first attempt. That might sound a lot but, breaking the article into sections will make it seem less daunting.

Your paragraphs

Plan to write a brief introduction and 3-5 paragraphs containing the major points of your topic. Write down headers for each of the points you intend to include in your article. You might decide not to use the headers in the finished article but the headers will help you to stay focused on the point you want to convey in each paragraph.

If you plan your article to have three paragraphs of main content plus the introduction , you only need to find 100 words to write in each paragraph, and that is a far easier goal to think about than finding 400 words. When you write the article, you obviously won't have exactly 100 words in each paragraph but this rule of thumb gives you something to aim for.

The "teaser"

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In addition to the body of the article, when you come to submit your article to the directories, most of them require you to provide a snippet or "teaser" consisting of a couple of sentences that will tempt the browsing public to read the whole article.

Most article directory submission forms give you the option of writing a couple of sentences separately to use as a teaser. This can be part of your introduction or summary reworded slightly. If you don't provide a teaser, the first paragraph of your article will normally be displayed. This does not always work out well, plus writing a separate introduction gives you a legitimate chance to use your key phrase again.

Less can be more

If you find you need more points when planning an article, it is probably better to split the information into two (or more) separate articles. Make sure that each section really is a fresh point and not a continuation of something you covered a couple of paragraphs back. The key to making your writing easy for you to do, and easy for other people to read is dividing up the content so that it is logically organized and does not jump backwards and forwards.

It is vital that the article flows fluently in logical sequence and does not include irrelevant material. If you have planned your article and, whilst writing, suddenly think of a further point related to your topic, don't just add that point automatically.

Consider whether it really belongs in that article or whether it would be better used as a starting point for another article on the same topic. Having your headers written down will help you to see immediately whether the new idea really fits in with what you had already planned.

Stick to your main topic

For instance, you might be writing an article about puppy training and suddenly have a flash of inspiration about doggy nutrition. Although the subjects are related, the new piece of information does not really belong in the article you have planned. It would be far better to jot down the idea for inclusion in a separate article about dog nutrition.

You can often tell how well a new thought will fit into an article you are writing by asking yourself whether it fits in with the title of the article. So, if your article is called "Training Your Puppy To Walk To Heel", it will be obvious that information about vitamins for adult dogs does not belong in that article.

Having fresh ideas during the writing process often happens. These bursts of inspiration

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can be used to write articles in themed clusters so that you effectively write several articles in a series or group at the same time. This is a slightly more advanced technique than most new writers would care to tackle, but it is worth cultivating the habit of making notes of ideas for articles as they occur right from the start.

A common mistake made by new writers is to try to cram everything they know about a topic into a single article. Putting too much diverse information into an article dilutes the value of the article by making the information in it harder to find.

People seeking information, can absorb facts better if they are presented in small relevant groups. If a person wants to learn all about dogs, they will learn more easily by working through a series of articles which each focus on one aspect of dogs. If a person wants to learn about one particular aspect of canine behavior, they will search for an article dealing with that one aspect. Either of them could be expected to be interested in an article entitled "Why Puppies Chew" but neither of them would choose to wade through a huge article claiming to contain "everything about dogs".

Your ezine articles should contain just enough information to be interesting, but also leave the reader with a reason to visit your website in search of further information. We will take a closer look at ways to do this later.

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CHAPTER 8 - STEP 5

WRITE YOUR ARTICLE

The following are the three essential elements of good article writing:

- Good grammar
- Correct spelling
- Proper punctuation

These elements are vital and, without using all of them, you won't produce a good article. Missing any of these three will mean that readers would have to struggle to understand what you are trying to convey in your article. Most people reading articles on the Internet would not bother to struggle; they would just click away to a more easily accessible article. An article lacking in any of these three elements would certainly not be accepted for publication in any decent ezine; the whole point of writing is to communicate effectively.

You will not communicate effectively without using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. However, they alone will not ensure that you produce a good ezine article. There are a few additional things you need in order to do that and they are:

- Style
- Content
- Keywords

Style is hard to define because it is a mixture of so many things. For example, it includes the vocabulary you use, the way you build phrases, the way you use punctuation and the tone of your writing. Your style will develop naturally as you continue writing and your articles will become recognizably yours in the same way as people would recognize your photo on your website or your voice on the phone.

Two tips

Two extra thing to do when writing for the internet are to keep your paragraphs shorter than you would normally and use subheadings wherever they would be appropriate. Reading online takes extra concentration, so you need to lead the reader on down your page.

Keep it clean

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There is one hard and fast rule of style in ezine writing: no swearing. The rule includes the use of even the mildest oath. The use of profanity is against the rules for publication practically everywhere online. If you want to gain maximum exposure for your articles, make sure you keep them squeaky clean.

Even people who are accustomed to hearing bad language, and perhaps even use it themselves, will be affronted if they are expected to read it. There is something different about seeing swear words written down that renders them doubly offensive. If you ever feel the need to use bad language in an article, make the effort to find an alternative way to express yourself.

Be natural

Write in a way that is natural to you but is still correct English. You need to retain proper English construction which will appear natural to your readers so that your writing does not seem stilted. This is why it is a good idea to read your article aloud before publishing it. Reading aloud highlights awkward-sounding passages. If a sentence is difficult to read aloud or simply sounds somehow "wrong", revise the phraseology or punctuation so that the sentence will flow easily as you read.

Practice makes perfect

If you are completely new to writing, you will benefit from writing a couple of practice articles before you attempt one for publication. The easiest way to approach this exercise is to take as your topic something you know in detail. This could be a recent visit to another city, or a shopping trip, or tips for fly fishing, or tips for finding a good used motor cycle.

Then write about the experience or pass on the tips as if you were on the phone to a friend who wants to know about your experience of the subject. If you keep firmly in mind that you are talking to a friend, you will avoid the dry stilted school essay effect.

The usual rules of writing can be interpreted in a more relaxed way when you are writing for the Internet. It is generally acceptable to use colloquialisms and write in a more conversational style. For instance, the use of "ok" is acceptable in most places. This does not, however, mean there is any excuse to be sloppy. I mentioned this above, but it is worth repeating to reinforce the point: correct grammar, spelling and punctuation must be present in order to enable people to read your article easily and understand what you are intending to communicate to them.

There is a rule of proper English usage that appeared for many years to have been carved

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in stone: a conjunction such as "and" or "but" must not be used as the first word of a sentence. This rule has been softened (actually, overpowered might be a better way of putting it). These words are often used at the start of sentences by copywriters for effect. That is, after all, the way conjunctions are used in everyday conversation.

Copywriting

Copywriting has its own separate set of rules, but this misuse of conjunctions has leached out into everyday creative writing. This means that your article would probably not get thrown out by ezine editors if you start sentences with "and", but you need to think of how your readers will view this style issue. Generally, it is better to keep on the safe side and stick to the conventional rule until you are 100% comfortable with article writing.

Content

Content is somewhat easier to define even though it is still subjective because the value of content is in the eye of the beholder. Your article content needs to be interesting, informative or entertaining but you won't be able to produce an article that would appeal to every single person in the world. The best thing you can do is to write content you believe is valuable and submit your article to ezines and directories within the appropriate niche.

Category

When selecting the category for your article at the article directories, only submit to the category that fits your article best. Don't be tempted to submit to an inappropriate category because it is more popular and you think you article has more chance of being seen there. It does not work like that. People do not locate articles online by browsing random shelves as they might in a library. Make sure your article is where anyone interested in your topic would expect to find it.

Keywords

Keywords are important to get the search engines to list your articles, but overuse of keywords would have a detrimental effect because it would make your article look like spam. Your keyword should be used in the title of your article, in the first paragraph and in the resource box. Your keyword can also be used in the other paragraphs of the article *provided its use seems natural,* but the use of similes is preferable.

It is impossible to state the exact number of times a keyword should be used in an article. This depends upon the length of the article and whether use of the keyword seems

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necessary and natural. A good rule of thumb is that a keyword density of more than 2% will be viewed as "keyword spamming". That might not sound very much, but consider using a long keyword phrase of 5-7 words more than twice in a 100 word paragraph and you will see how forced and unnatural it seems.

Some article directories (and the mighty EzineArticles.com is one of them) will not accept articles with a keyword density of over 2%.

It is very important to remember that use of the keyword must seem *natural*, so you should use it as sparingly as you would in normal conversation.

Don't use a keyword repeatedly for no good reason: this is "keyword stuffing". The search engines will recognize it and give your article the thumbs down.

Use synonyms for your keyword or key phrase. This makes your article more interesting for your readers, it will also count in your favor with Google because the Googlebot has been educated to understand and appreciate the use of synonyms. Where Googlebot goes, the other bots follow -- it is only a matter of time.

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CHAPTER 9 – STEP 6

COUNT YOUR WORDS

Between 350 and 700 words is the best size for a serious ezine article. If you write fewer than 350 words, your article is unlikely to be taken seriously: it will look like a note rather than an article. Anything much over 700 words might demand more space than an ezine publisher wants to allocate.

You should also take into account the way your article will appear on the article directory pages; if your article is too long, your resource box will appear too far "below the fold", readers will have to scroll down and this will reduce the likelihood of readers clicking on your website link.

You need to bear in mind that some article directories (Isnare is one) specify that they will not accept articles of under 500 words. You will get to know which directories welcome shorter articles, and then you can decide whether you will just submit articles to them or whether it is worth your while persevering and writing longer articles.

Few ezines will accept any article over 1200 words long. If you write an article amounting to over 1200 words, first of all check that your writing is not sloppy, repetitive or unnecessarily long-winded. If your writing is "tight" and every word is informative, split the work into two articles and call them a 2 part series. Add a paragraph mentioning that the article is one in a series and point the reader in the direction of the url for the other article. You also get double the number of resource boxes that way.

Raising your word count

If you have the opposite problem, and find you have run out of things to say before your article has reached the 500-word mark, there are a couple of simple ways to bring your word count up to the level required by the article directories. Make it a rule, however, that you never use artificial padding to inflate your word count. The trick is to add words that enhance the value of your article, and don't just puff it up.

These are some legitimate ways of boosting your word count:

1.   Add a sub-title to the article and use sub headings (if appropriate) for each paragraph.
2.   Use quotations. Some articles can be uplifted by the use of a famous quotation, but only use a quotation if it is *relevant* to your topic.

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3. Quote statistics. If your article is not suited to the use of quotations, you might be able to add some statistical information. This, together with details of its source, will add more words.

If you follow the steps set out above, you should find it comparatively easy to write articles of the appropriate length for ezine publication.

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CHAPTER 10 – STEP 7

CREATE YOUR RESOURCE BOX

This is your advertisement and is as important as your article title. The amount of text you are allowed to put into your author's "bio" varies, but most ezines demand that a resource box is limited to about 5 lines. Some insist on as low as 3 lines but 5 is a good average to work on.

Link and url

You need to fit into those 5 lines your website url, your main keyword or key phrase and some wording designed to attract the reader's interest or to pique curiosity so that he or she will click through to your website. Some article directories allow 2 or 3 urls or email addresses in a resource box, and some have a strict limit of one link per article. It is not a good idea to put your email address in your resource box -- that is just asking for spam.

Make it relevant

You will get the best results if your promotional phrases relate to your article content. If your article is about cooking, your readers will naturally expect your resource box to direct them to a web page related to cooking. If your resource box points to a web page about organic gardening, this will confuse and disappoint any readers hoping to learn more about cooking. This sounds obvious, but many writers make the mistake of linking all their articles to their website home page.

If you write articles both on cooking and on organic gardening, you should include links to web pages relating to both those niches. This will give your readers what they expect, the important thing is to ensure that you don't disappoint the reader.

Anchor text

Some people only ever write articles about one subject and they keep to just one resource box as a form of "branding". This is often done by having a catchy slogan that people will remember and recognize and which will also pique the interest of your readers and tempt them to visit your website. It is far better, however, if you revise your resource box to suit each new article, then you can include your article keywords as anchor text in the resource box, and this is another titbit to tempt the search engine robots.

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The best resource box will read like a continuation of your article and make clicking your website link irresistible.

In addition to linking your resource box to your website with an html link, you should also type in the full url, then the reader can still find your website even if the link is broken.

TIP

Always keep control of your links; the best way to do this is to link to pages of websites you own and control.

It is tempting to link directly to an affiliate webpage when you are starting out, particularly if money is tight, but doing so is dangerous because you can lose the benefit of the links you have created.

For example if the affiliate page is moved by the program owner or you decide to promote an alternative program, you would want to use existing articles you have published. You will be unable to change the links in your articles which might be posted anywhere on the internet.

If you have linked the articles to a page on a website you own, it is a simple matter to redirect all traffic produced by those articles to a new product page.

You will have some control over your links if you create blogs and redirect to affiliate pages from there but it is far better to have your own website. Hosting for unlimited websites can be obtained for under $10.00 a month with HostGator who offer an excellent service. Hosting at HostGator starts at $4.95 per month so, if funds are tight, you could start with the smallest package and upgrade later.

I have my niche websites hosted at HostGator and it is very quick and easy to start a new site from scratch (without needing to learn any html coding) using free Wordpress templates.

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CHAPTER 11 – STEP 8

PROOFREAD AND EDIT

Thorough proofreading and editing are vital when you are writing your first few articles.

Never send off an article immediately after you have finished writing it. Leave it overnight, sleep on it, then come back to it the next day to proofread and edit it. If yesterday's work of art seems less appealing in the harsh light of a new day, rewrite it until you are satisfied with the improvement and then leave it another day. Proofread and edit again and then leave overnight (proofreading is also easier after you have had a break from the writing of the article). Keep doing this until you are satisfied with the article.

Proofreading and editing seem like an awful chore when you have tons of other things you want to be doing, but it is well worth getting your articles as close to perfect as you can manage before you try submitting them. You will waste more time if you rush to submit an article without bothering to proofread and it is rejected because it contains grammatical errors.

Don't try to rush

Sometimes, you will only need to edit an article once but, if you are not completely satisfied with the result, don't rush to publish. If you have a problem article that you can't seem to get exactly right, put it aside for a week while you do other things and then go back to it. You will be surprised at how effective this can be. After a week's rest an article that you had thought was fit only for the trash, might need only minor editing to turn it into an article worth publishing.

Check your spelling

Do a spell check with MS Word (or whichever word processor you are using) but don't just rely totally on your PC's spell-checking software. All that spell-check software does is verify that the words you use exist in the dictionary; it won't know if they make sense or not. If you type in that the cult member sold his sole to Santa, the software will not know you meant to refer to selling "his soul to Satan" but your readers will!

Read it aloud

Read the article carefully yourself (preferably aloud) as this will highlight errors in grammar

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or punctuation. Reading aloud also slows you down so that you don't skip words or read what you expect to see and this will help you spot typos or spelling blunders.

If possible, have your articles read by somebody else before you publish them. Enlist the help of a relative or friend who has a good grasp of correct English and can be trusted to give you an honest opinion of your work.

Don't skip the final polish

Never be tempted to skip or rush the proofreading and editing process. If the articles you have in circulation are full of spelling errors, typos and grammatical slips, anyone reading them will assume they are the work of a person with a "couldn't care less" attitude. This will not make your readers eager to click through to your website to see what else you have to offer; they will move on to an author who appears to care about his/her business. If the presentation is sloppy, even brilliant content will not rescue an article: the simple reason is that people are less likely to bother to read it.

It gets quicker!

The proof-reading, editing and rewriting sound like a very long-winded process (and probably will be at first) but you will get faster with each article you write. Quite soon instinct will start to take over and you will be able to skip reading aloud and you won't feel you need a second opinion. Also you will be far more relaxed about the whole idea of writing, so it will be a pleasure rather than an ordeal – this alone will make it seem to take up less time.

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CHAPTER 12 – STEP 9

SEND TO EZINE PUBLISHERS

If you are using the "Bum Marketing Method" of article marketing, you might want to skip this step and go straight on to step 10. (Do come back and read this part; you never know what direction your future online will take. For example you might want to submit articles to specialist ezines.)

If, however, you are writing articles in order to become known as an expert in your field and to establish a web presence, it is worth building a relationship with publishers of appropriate ezines,

Find suitable ezine publishers

Do searches to find a large number of ezine publishers (the more the better) and list their names and contact emails. Send your article to each of them with a short personalized over paragraph at the top. Personalization is important since most ezine publishers receive hundreds of these emails every day.

Be selective and don't spam

Don't spray and pray: avoid the temptation to be lazy and send every article you write to every ezine publisher and article directory you find: this is spamming. Take a little time to check what sort of articles the various sites want. Edit your list of publishers into sections by niche. Then it will be easy to pick out the publishers who would welcome articles relating to particular topics. If an ezine is about motor cycling, there is no point submitting articles about grocery shopping or butterfly collecting.

If you consistently bombard a site with unsuitable material, you can find yourself blacklisted by a potentially valuable source of free publicity. Remember, there are real people at those sites who have to read the articles before they are accepted, so don't annoy them by wasting their time submitting material you should know they won't want.

Format your email

Make sure you format your email by making a hard carriage return at the end of each line. Keep your lines down to 60 - 65 characters so that your article will be displayed correctly by email servers. If you neglect the hard carriage returns, your article can end up with

by Elaine Currie

breaks in strange places and overlong lines that require the reader to scroll. The general effect will be messy and the article will be difficult to read. The result will be that the busy publisher will skip your email in favor of ones that are easy to read. It is tiresome to have to scroll across the screen to read each line of an email. If you are reading a single email from a friend, you might consider it well worth the effort. If you were an ezine editor who receives 200 articles by email every day, you would see things differently.

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CHAPTER 13 – STEP 10

SUBMIT TO ARTICLE DIRECTORIES

There are hundreds of article directory sites where you can submit your articles. You can easily find these sites by searching with any major search engine. Some article directories only accept submissions by email but the vast majority require submission to be made by filling in an online form.

Before you are permitted to submit articles, you will need to sign up as a member of each directory in order to obtain an author login ID and password. In my experience there is no need to fear spamming from article directories, but you will receive many email confirmations telling you your article has been accepted and giving you details of the url where your article is published online. To keep things tidy, you might prefer to have a separate dedicated email account for use with article submissions.

When submitting online to article directories, read the instructions at each site before attempting to post an article, as the instructions do vary from site to site. Here are some requirements that most article directories have in common:

Title:

Your title should be in what is called "title case", ie the first letter of each word should be a capital letter, don't use all capitals.

The title should not end with a full stop.

Do not use quotation marks or special characters in the title of your article.

Do not use multiple question marks or exclamation points for emphasis (it's best not to use them anywhere because they are vulgar).

In general it is best to keep punctuation in titles to a minimum. It is acceptable to use a colon or a dash or a question mark but only if the punctuation is *necessary*.

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Article Body:

Don't use html for affiliate links or anything else in the body of your article. Hardly any article directories allow html in the article itself (although most will allow it for things like making text bold or italicized). Any html is usually confined to the resource box. If you submit an article containing html it will probably just be stripped out by the submission software. Alternatively, the system might just reject your article altogether.

Don't put a hard return break at the end of each line. If you have previously formatted the article to 50 or so characters per line for email use, copy it into Notepad to remove the line breaks before submitting to the directories.

Put two carriage returns at the end of each paragraph.

Resource Box:

Generally, the directories permit only one or two live links in a resource box. There are exceptions, and this is a good reason to read the rules at each site. The links can be to a web page or autoresponder sign-up, the choice is up to you.

Check to see whether the directory requires you to use html to make your link live. Some want html while others will make your links live provided you use the full url including the "http". This is another good reason to check the rules − it would be a shame to spend time writing and submitting articles and then mess up your link.

Preview:

Always make use of the preview tool, if the article directory has one, to check that your article will be displayed properly. It only takes a second and it is far better to catch any errors before the article is finally submitted. You can also take the opportunity to click on your link in the resource box to make sure it is working.

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CHAPTER 14

AUTOMATING THE SUBMISSION PROCESS

The submission process can be very time-consuming and there are services which, for a fee, will submit your articles to the directories for you. If you are operating with a limited budget, these services might seem expensive, but automation is desirable because your time as a business owner has value.

Isnare

Isnare is an article directory. It also offers a paid service where your articles are circulated to thousands of article directories and lists. You can take advantage of this service either by paying for a membership upgrade or by buying credits.

Article Submitter Software

Another alternative is to use a software package such as Mass Article Control to speed up the submission process. Try out the free version of Mass Article Control and see how much time it can save you.

Mozilla Firefox Browser

The most efficient way of doing your own manual article submissions is to use the Mozilla Firefox tabbed browser which can comfortably handle opening up a dozen or more article directory websites at a time with just one click of your mouse. This is how it works:

If you don't have the Firefox browser, download Mozilla Firefox free of charge.

1 Open a new page by clicking "file" and then "new tab" from the drop-down menu or by typing Ctrl+T.

2 Type or paste in the address of an ezine directory to get the site on screen.
Don't log in yet; you want to be at your log in page each time you open it.

by Elaine Currie

Automating the submission process continued...

3 Click for another new tab and do the same thing.

4 When you have opened as many tabs as you want (8 or 10 is perfectly manageable), click on "Bookmarks" on the toolbar.

5 Select "Bookmark all tabs" from the dropdown menu.

6 In the box that appears, click the far right arrow to show all bookmark folders, select "new folder" and type in the name you want to give the group.

There is no limit to the number of groups you can create. So, if you are submitting to 100 directories, they can conveniently be split into ten groups containing ten directories each.

To add more sites to any particular group:

1 You do the same steps up to and including 4.

2 Click on the first choice in the dropdown menu, "Bookmark this page" and select a group where you want to place the new site.

Deleting moving, renaming, moving bookmarks etc is simple: click on "Bookmarks" and select "Manage bookmarks".

To open a saved group, click on "Bookmarks", scroll down to the group you want and click on "open in tabs" at the bottom of the list of urls.

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When you open a group, all of your sites will automatically load within one browser window and you'll see the individual tabs for easy navigation. Once you have saved all the sites in groups, you can open them all at the same time and log in. Mozilla Firefox has a log in manager function which will save your ID and password for each site and enable you to log in automatically, with no typing − just with one mouse click.

Then you have a choice of ways to complete the online submission forms. One way is to copy and paste your article and your resource box into Notepad. For the sake of easy copying, have the title, article body and resource box on separate lines with a space between each one. Also copy in (again on separate lines) the keywords associated with the article and the brief introductory summary ("teaser") most article directories require. You can then copy the separate parts of your article and paste them into the appropriate fields of the submission form.

Roboform

You can make the log in and submission process easier and faster if you use Roboform to fill in the sign up forms and save your author log in ID and password at each site. All you do is fill in your details: name, address, email, etc once and the friendly robot will automatically fill in forms and save log in details for you.

The log in manager function of Mozilla Firefox works perfectly well. The reason for using Roboform in preference to that is that Roboform has a custom feature which you can use to further automate your submission to the article directories. This is very easy to set up and use.

First create an "identity" for yourself in Roboform. Then go to the custom screen and in the fields under the header "Field Name" type in the name of the relevant fields you will want Roboform to fill in on the article directory submission forms. For example, Title, author, article body content, article url, resource box, summary, keywords etc. You might want to add an alternative extended bio or sub-title field but you can add to or change the details at any time.

Alongside the field names you have typed in, you will see that there is another columns of boxes under the header "Field Value". This is where you paste in the details you want Roboform to insert into the submission forms. So, you paste your name (or pen name) into the box next to the "author name" field, the title of the article goes into the box next to the "title" field and so on. Don't worry that the field for your article body looks small; it will expand as soon as you paste the article in.

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You are now all set up to have Roboform automatically fill in all those article submission forms for you. When you want to submit a new article, you can use the same form and simply paste the elements of the new article into the relevant fields.

If you intend to perform the article submission process yourself, at the very least download Roboform and use the custom facility to fill in the submission forms. Using Roboform is much faster than doing each submission manually.

by Elaine Currie

CHAPTER 15

THE NEXT STEP − SPEEDWRITING

Now that you are familiar with the process of writing and submitting ezine articles, the next step is to learn how to speed up the actual writing process. If you intend to use article marketing in place of PPC to draw traffic, you need to understand that it is not enough to write the occasional article; you need to think in terms of writing several each day. That will sound a lot if you are new to writing, but it is perfectly possible. It is also well worth doing when you take into account the amount you stand to save in advertising costs by driving free traffic to your website.

The topic of speedwriting was going to form the basis of my next book about writing for the Internet. However, there is an excellent book already available on this subject. The author took a public challenge on the Internet Warriors Forum and, using the "Golden Formula" he sets out in the book, he wrote 40 unique and informative articles in the space of 2 work days on different niches and based on different keywords.

Andrew Hansen has done such a thorough job with Article Speedwriting, there is no point in attempting to reinvent this particular wheel. I highly recommend this book; in particular, look out for the advice on creating an effective resource box and the tips on boosting word count in ways that don't create a "fluffy" sounding article.

by Elaine Currie

CHAPTER 16

ARTICLE MARKETING

Once you have learned the basics of ezine article writing, you will probably be anxious to make the best use of your skills to earn money. The easiest way to learn everything you need to know about article marketing is by using a video based course.

I can personally recommend the course known as the 4 Day Money Making Blueprint.. I have studied this course and reviewed it – and even managed to learn how to do a couple of things that had been giving me headaches for about three years!

The 4 Day Money Making Blueprint ("4D-MMB") is easy to understand, very detailed and excellent value for money.

If you prefer to work with written tutorials, I can recommend the downloadable e-book called Niche Marketing On Crack – it is a horrible title, but an excellent book and is written by Andrew Hansen (the author of Article Speedwriting).

Niche Marketing On Crack is well organized; it has three main sections detailing step by step the methods of finding profitable niches, building niche websites, and promotion.

There is a further section on how to keep your niche marketing business going and growing.

The book ends with two short but very useful chapters. The first is a list of clickable links to resources mentioned throughout the instructions. This list is set out in the order of the chapters to which the resources apply and is great for quick reference.

The final chapter is a "table" setting out the steps for Niche Marketing On Crack so the supremely lazy person doesn't even need to write his own checklist.

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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Here is a list of the tools and resources I have mentioned throughout this book, plus a few additional resources I use in my online business.

4 Day Money Making Blueprint.. - Simply the best article marketing online video tutorial

Article Speedwriting – The "Golden Formula" for superfast writing

Autoresponder – Aweber, a very reliable autoresponder service

HostGator – The cheapest reliable hosting anywhere.

Mozilla Firefox – The most popular browser on the Web

Mass Article Control – Article submission software

Niche Marketing On Crack – Article Marketing from start to finish – fast!

Roboform – Automatic form filler, password, identity protection software

For further free advertising resources, please visit:
http://www.huntingvenus.com/freeadvertisingreview.html

For some excellent free e-books, please go to:
http://www.huntingvenus.com/eceboo.htm

To learn how to turn $5 into $150, please go to:
Turn $5 into $150!

For more information about useful webmaster tools, please visit my Work At Home Directory website at http://www.HuntingVenus.com